



Bethinking of Old Orleans

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THE VILLAGE INN

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The following excerpts are from a talk which was presented at the Annual Patriotic Program in the Cobblestone Church at Childs by Delia Robinson, deputy historian for Gaines. These historical remarks are made in reference to the Village Inn at Childs and the historic marker recently dedicated there. The 1870's photo included here is the earliest known photo of the Village Inn when it was called the Fair-Haven House.

"In 1823 Samuel Percival purchased land here in what is now Childs, totalling 20 acres. By 1824 he had established what is referred to in deeds as the "tavern stand". We have as yet found no records for the business we know as the Village Inn, but there were similar establishments in nearby areas of New York State. These stage coach stops offered the traveler food, drink and lodging as well as a place at which to wash off the dirt of travel. It is reported that generally the men shaved in the barroom as that was the only room with a mirror. In addition the men were asked to wash at the pump outside where the horses were watered. The ladies, though, generally had the luxury of washing inside, although sometimes it was in a parlor rather than a bedroom.... by 1838 the Ridge was heavily traveled by stage coaches filled with passengers. Early accounts recorded six to eight coaches each way EVERY DAY!

Mr. Percival's tavern stand was the eastern portion of what we know as the Village Inn. He ran the establishment until 1829 after which time many owners succeeded him. One of the owners was John Proctor, the founder of this village, who leased the establishment to proprietors for 14 years. By 1852 stage coach travel died out with the coming of the railroads and many of the taverns or inns went out of business - but not the Fair Haven Hotel. Indeed, before 1860 a new business was

established just west of the building to service the horses and carriages of residents and travelers - John N. King built his Carriage Shop. Perhaps the reason why Fair Haven did not decline was the travel between the railroad, Ridge and canal all which were bisected by the road we know today as Oak Orchard Road on July 1, 1870 ... the Board of Excise for the town met and ruled that Philo Mann be granted license to sell liquor for the sum of \$50.00 for one year at the Fair Haven Hotel.

On May 4, 1874 there was a formal protest registered with that board by the Fair Haven Good Templars against the Fair Haven House and its proprietor James D. Burns. The protest was duly noted but Mr. Burns did receive his license for \$40.00 The Fair Haven Temperance Company did not take formal papers of incorporation until 1878, but they were serious in their formation.

About the same time one of their members, John Sunderland, deeded them a portion of land 31' x 51' on which they could and did build their Good Templars Hall. The interesting part is, that Hall was constructed directly across the Ridge from the Hotel and existed until 1906 when the land and building were deeded to Jacob and Etta Sandle. That site today is where Art Gould's garage stands. By 1875 Mr. King's Carriage Shop was physically joined to the Fair Haven Hotel by a carriage shed and this combined structure is what we know today as the Village Inn.

After James Burns died, his wife Isabelle took over as owner. It is unusual to find a woman's name on a deed in this time period but more unusual is that for the next 20 years women continued to own the establishment.

During prohibition many establishments became speakeasies. Several residents of Childs today say that they remember that although the Fair Haven House "didn't sell liquor" that the clientele seemed to have trouble exiting just as much then, as they did when it did sell alcoholic drinks! By the 1930's Carrie Walsh was using the Hotel for her private residence. She grew vegetables and herbs in her garden behind the building, where the parking lot is today, and sat on her porch and sold them to those who passed by.

By 1952 the establishment was up for sale and our present owners were the buyers.

The Village Inn of today is the combination of the Fair Haven Hotel, John King's Carriage Shop and the carriage shed which joined the two."